

The **PhD in Urban Affairs** was approved following an external review of the program conducted by Ed Goetz, director of the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota, and Connie Ozawa, professor of Urban Studies and Planning at Portland State University.

In their evaluation, the external reviewers remarked:

"It is clear that the proposal is the product of intense collaboration among academics ... as well as with critical community organizations. SUAPP has created a culture among its master's program students of dedication to community-driven and information-based policy making. The interdisciplinary nature of the curriculum is right on target for relieving urban problems."

Evidence of need for this program emerged from a series of Community Advisory group discussions that leadership in the School of Urban Affairs and Public Policy (SUAPP) conducted with non-profit and philanthropic leaders in Memphis.

These conversations and others like it have underscored a need for increased research, analysis, and evaluation capacity. As evidenced in their letters of support, local nonprofit and philanthropic leaders see the proposed PhD in Urban Affairs as an important tool in providing the increased local capacity. A few excerpts below from these support letters emphasize this point.

"We see a consistent deficit in systems thinking in nonprofits, and often our partners have only a superficial comprehension of research and evaluation. Even more problematic is the disconnect between evaluation and action, and often the decisions made in the nonprofit community are not data informed, culturally intelligent, or results-based. With a focus on urban problem solving, the PhD in Urban Affairs will have a remarkable impact on the way nonprofits, government agencies, and the for-profit sector solve our community's most deeply entrenched socioeconomic challenges. This program will undoubtedly develop a better equipped team of problem solvers to tackle these challenges."

- *Kevin Dean, Chief Executive Officer, Momentum Nonprofit Partners
(The primary capacity building intermediary in Memphis, with a membership of 350 nonprofits)*

"Our city and region clearly require additional professionals and students with more advanced degrees as policy analysts, researchers, and administrators. The issues facing us are complex, requiring multidisciplinary approaches and solutions. The Urban Affairs PhD proposed by the University ensures a relevant and effective educational program that addresses these needs.

- *Teresa Sloyan, Executive Director, Hyde Family Foundation*

“A PhD program in Urban Affairs at the University of Memphis will help ensure more of our citizens will have the critical (and in our opinion, crucial) skills of research, evaluation, and evidence-based practice and policy design to drive more people out of poverty so they can live the lives of their dreams. All too often, the work of addressing poverty is seen as a task requiring the city to “bring in the out-of-town experts.” With a PhD in Urban Affairs at the University of Memphis, we can turn this idea around and see our own people, our own resources, and our own strategies as being every bit as strong – and much more knowledgeable of our own challenges – as those we solicit from other communities.”

- *Dr. Kenneth Robinson, President and CEO, United Way Midsouth*